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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes data on access to postsecondary education for students from low income families. From a national perspective, access to postsecondary education for students from low-income families is less now than at any time since 1970. By income quartile, in 1996 the chance that students from families with an annual income below $24,500 would graduate from high school and enter college was roughly 35%, a 7.6% increase over 1980, compared to an 80% chance for students of the same age from families with an annual income of $72,000 or more, a 16.7% increase over 1980. Averaging data across the last 6 years, there is only a 16.1% chance that students within the state of Alabama from low income families will gain access to postsecondary education. This ranks Alabama as one of the lowest in the nation. Many factors affect access to postsecondary educational opportunity, including the extent of poverty in a state, the high school graduation rate, the availability of financial assistance, changes in financial aid regulations, rising tuition and fees, availability of support systems such as transportation and child care, and the flexibility of work schedules of students from low income families. This report presents six charts that provide information about access for the country, southern states, and Alabama. (JJL)

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ED 432 350

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

A REPORT

TO THE

ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

August 12, 1999

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BASED ON

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY,
THE MORTENSON RESEARCH SEMINAR ON
PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS OF OPPORTUNITY
FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

JC 990 506

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POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education

- Access to postsecondary education is a cornerstone of the two-year college philosophy.
- Access to postsecondary education is one of the primary reasons for the existence of two-year colleges.
- Access to postsecondary education is central to the mission of two-year colleges throughout the nation, and thanks to the Alabama State Board of Education, it is the most fundamental element of the mission of two-year colleges in Alabama.
- The Alabama State Board of Education and the presidents of The Alabama College System have worked steadfastly to ensure access to postsecondary education for all the citizens of Alabama.
- Access to postsecondary education is important because a well-informed, well-read, well-educated citizenry produces a more refined and enlightened social, cultural, and political environment which benefits all.
- Access to postsecondary education is important because the economy of the coming years requires workers who are more highly skilled and better trained than ever before. Economic development in Alabama cannot proceed without a highly trained workforce, which can most efficiently be produced through access to postsecondary education. Training and education beyond high school are essential to the economic well being of the entire state.
- That is why the results of the recent study by The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education are so important.
- The report of The Mortenson Research Seminar measures access to postsecondary education for students from low income families, through a measure which is referred to as "chance for college."
- The report of The Mortenson Research Seminar examines access to postsecondary education for students from low income families from several perspectives. From the national perspective, access to postsecondary education for students from low income families is less now than at any time since 1970.
- By income quartile, in 1996 the chance that students from families with an annual income below $24,500 will graduate from high school and enter college is roughly 35%, a 7.6% increase over 1980; compared to an 80% chance for students of the same age from families with an annual income of $72,000 or more, a 16.7% increase over 1980.
- Bachelor degree completions by students from the bottom income quartile have decreased from 28% in 1984 to 15% in 1996.
- In averaging the access to postsecondary education for students from low income families over the last six years for all the states and the District of Columbia, Alabama ranks 50th, with a 16.1% chance that students from low income families will gain access to postsecondary education. This ranks Alabama as one of the lowest in the nation, and the lowest among the 16 SREB states.

- Many factors affect access to postsecondary educational opportunity as defined by the Mortenson Research Seminar study. Among these are the extent or scope of poverty in a state, the high school graduation rate, the availability of financial assistance, changes in regulations shifting more assistance to students from higher family income levels, universities shifting more aid to students from higher family income levels, rising tuition and fees, availability of support systems such as transportation and child care, and the flexibility of work schedules of students from low income families.

- The percentage of the population living in poverty in Alabama is 20 percent, higher only in Mississippi, New Mexico, and the District of Columbia.

- Over one-third of Alabama's population age 25 and over has not graduated from high school, exceeded only by Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, and West Virginia.

- The high school drop-out rate in Alabama is high.

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

AVERAGE FOR THE LAST SIX YEARS
SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

	National Rank*	Chance
New Hampshire	1	68.5%
Minnesota	2	51.7%
North Dakota	3	45.4%
Hawaii	24	25.9%
Florida	25	25.8%
Ohio	26	25.5%
District of Columbia	49	16.2%
Alabama	50	16.1%
Alaska	51	8.3%

(*Includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia)

Source: *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, Number 83, May 1999.

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

AVERAGE FOR THE LAST SIX YEARS (SREB STATES ONLY)

Maryland	36.3%	
U.S.		29.5%
Florida	25.8%	
Oklahoma	24.8%	
Virginia	24.1%	
South Carolina	23.0%	
Georgia	22.8%	
Kentucky	22.4%	
North Carolina	22.3%	
West Virginia	22.1%	
Louisiana	20.7%	
Mississippi	19.9%	
Delaware	18.6%	
Tennessee	18.1%	
Texas	17.8%	
Arkansas	16.5%	
Alabama	16.1%	

Source: *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, Number 83, May 1999.

ALABAMA'S NATIONAL RANKING*
IN
ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

1992-93	46
1993-94	46
1994-95	46
1995-96	49
1996-97	50
1997-98	47

(*Includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia)

Source: *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, Number 83, May 1999.

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

	Alabama	U.S.*
1992-93	15.9%	23.2%
1993-94	18.0%	28.2%
1994-95	15.9%	29.0%
1995-96	13.4%	30.4%
1996-97	15.3%	32.0%
1997-98	18.2%	34.4%

(*Includes all 50 states and the District of Columbia)

Source: *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, Number 83, May 1999.

ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

1997-98
(SREB STATES ONLY)

Delaware	40.2%	
Maryland	39.6%	
U.S.		34.4%
West Virginia	29.3%	
Georgia	28.2%	
South Carolina	28.1%	
North Carolina	27.1%	
Florida	27.1%	
Virginia	26.1%	
Oklahoma	24.2%	
Kentucky	24.1%	
Louisiana	20.2%	
Mississippi	19.9%	
Tennessee	18.7%	
Alabama	18.2%	
Texas	17.8%	
Arkansas	17.8%	

Source: *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, Number 83, May 1999.

METHOD OF CALCULATING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM LOW INCOME FAMILIES

ALABAMA 1997-98

$$\frac{\text{NUMBER OF LOW INCOME UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AGE 18-24 FROM THE STATE WHO ARE IN COLLEGE}}{\text{TOTAL NUMBER OF POTENTIAL LOW INCOME STUDENTS IN THE SAME AGE COHORT IN THE STATE}} = \text{Chance for College}$$

$$\frac{27{,}158}{149{,}532} = 18.2\%$$

Source: *Postsecondary Education Opportunity*, The Mortenson Research Seminar on Public Policy Analysis of Opportunity for Postsecondary Education, Number 83, May 1999.